

Maureen Cuda
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Good evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Maureen Cuda and I am a registered voter in the city of Shelton.

I am here to testify regarding the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services Budget. I am the Program Director for Bridge House, the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services funded social rehabilitation program in Bridgeport. The past eleven months have been very challenging for our members, who struggle on a daily basis with their mental illness. Isolation is one of the most severe and serious challenges our members contend with each and every day of their lives. During the pandemic it became unavoidable and extremely paralyzing to some. Members who were used to attending Bridge House on a daily, weekly or monthly basis were forced like everyone in this country to stay home. To isolate!!! To be alone!!!

As the Program Director, I wish at this time to commend the staff of this agency for maintaining contact with each member by phone, (listening sometimes several times weekly to their sadness and loneliness) sending out hundreds of emails and developing a virtual community face book page with the ability to reach some 100 members daily with planned programming. Staff produced a weekly mailing, they packaged and delivered food weekly and offered jigsaw puzzles when requested. Some members were able to join in these activities virtually and then onsite while following CDC guidelines.

I can't tell you how many times staff were told they were blessed, they were angels and life saviors. Members told us we saved their life and kept them out of the hospital. Without the funding for our program from DMHAS, many of our members would have suffered alone, isolated in their apartments. Bridge House is and has been a safe and constant haven during this crisis.

I Thank you for your continued support of the hundreds of members who utilize the services of Bridge House.